

# EXHIBIT 27

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## LA sheriff clashes with county lawyer over closing gun shops

by STEFANIE DAZIO and DON THOMPSON Associated Press

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AA



FILE -- In this Dec. 9, 2015, file photo, sales associate Mike Conway, right, shows Paul Angulo guns at Bullseye Sport gun shop in Riverside, Calif. With six new gun control bills signed by California's Gov. Jerry Brown in July 2016, sales of semi-automatic rifles have more than doubled in California over last year. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong, File)



LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Los Angeles County sheriff said Tuesday gun shops are not essential businesses and ordered deputies to make sure they were closed during the coronavirus crisis

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Los Angeles, the nation's largest county, on Wednesday ordered a stay-at-home order last week that required all nonessential businesses to close to slow the spread of the virus.

The county order — and an executive order from Gov. Gavin Newsom — did not specifically mention gun shops, prompting the Los Angeles County counsel's office to issue a statement late Tuesday saying it has “opined that gun stores qualify as essential businesses.”

It was not immediately clear what the conflicting guidance meant for gun stores.

Sheriff Alex Villanueva said earlier that a “loophole” had allowed gun shops to stay open, and many attracted long lines of customers. Villanueva said the order was meant to keep open gun and ammunition businesses that support police departments and other security organizations.

The stay-at-home order is not a license “for everyone to be panic gun-buying or rushing to stores, which is now what we’re seeing,” Villanueva said.

He said gun shops have complied and deputies have not had to issue any citations. The county's stay-at-home order was crafted by the health department and Villanueva said he's working with the agency on new language.

County Counsel Mary Wickham could not immediately be reached Tuesday evening for more details on the opinion that the stores could remain open. The sheriff's department did not have further information on Villanueva's orders in light of the new information.

The sheriff's decision enraged Second Amendment advocates who said they planned to challenge it in court. The sheriff also said deputies would close strip clubs and nightclubs if they were open in the violation of the order.

Sam Paredes, executive director of Gun Owners of California, said his organization is looking at legal action to overturn Villanueva's decision.

“There are far more important things that the sheriff can be doing than sending uniformed officers to gun stores telling them they’re going to be shut down by force,” Paredes said. “We’ve

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...pite an  
order to do so in Alameda County, sheriff's Sgt. Ray Kelley said Thursday.

"We'll start out nice," Kelley said. "Then we'll post a notice to close and then we will take enforcement."

The gun shop posted on Facebook a day later that it had closed. Calls to the store were not answered Tuesday.

Chuck Michel, an attorney for the National Rifle Association-affiliated California Rifle and Pistol Association, said the organization is trying to work with local authorities in California to keep gun stores open.

"They don't just sell guns — they sell camping gear, survival gear, things that people may need," he said. "Gun stores have been deemed to be essential in many, many jurisdictions, but unfortunately some of these jurisdictions are allowing politics to creep in."

The FBI reported a slight decline in the number of firearms background checks from California in February, before the brunt of the coronavirus pandemic, from 96,567 in January to 95,430 last month.

The state Department of Justice, which does background checks and regulates sales of firearms and ammunition, said it doesn't have updated statistics for March that can be publicly shared.

Nationally, orders deeming gun shops to be essential or nonessential vary.

In Pennsylvania, Gov. Tom Wolf quietly allowed gun shops to reopen on a limited basis during the coronavirus pandemic after several justices of the state Supreme Court urged him to do so. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court had narrowly dismissed a gun shop's lawsuit that challenged Wolf's authority to shutter businesses deemed "non-life-sustaining."

In New Jersey, Gov. Phil Murphy's executive order does not explicitly list gun dealers. But the state's online service that processes background checks is not taking more requests and its

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Thompson reported from Sacramento. Associated Press writers Juliet A. Williams in San Francisco and Michael Rubinkam in northeastern Pennsylvania contributed.

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